

CHAPTER XIII

Markets and the Community

621 IN rural Ireland what we have called the "rural community" is no simply defined geographical area. Any one of the recognized divisions of the countryside in Ireland, a townland, a group of townlands, a parish, an old barony, a mountain upland, a portion of a valley floor or plain, except perhaps the newer administrative divisions, is in a sense a community. The lines of relationship among the small farmers are continuous from one of these to another across the land. Geographic barriers serve only to deflect the lines of this continuum, not to divide it.

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186 We observe of a farmer of Luogh, for example, that he coors largely in Luogh townland. But he has kinsmen scattered around about as far as Mount Elva, four miles to the north, and Liscannor, three miles to the south. He attends the parish church of Killilagh, a two-mile walk from his house, but sends his children to school at Ballycotton, only a mile off. He does most of his shopping in Roadford, a crossroad settlement two miles away. Yet he takes his larger produce for sale and his larger needs of purchase to the market town of Ennistymon, some eight miles off, or the smaller one of Lisdoonvarna, some five miles off. He votes and pays his taxes as a member of a certain electoral district which overlaps exactly none of these regions. He associates himself in tradition with Clare and Munster as a North Clare man, rather than with Galway and Connaught,

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though he may have seen very little of either beyond his 62/
market towns. The small farmer of Luogh has allegiances 186
to all these communities. He is quite ready to find his emotion stirred in any one of them. He is ready to back the men of Luogh against the men of the neighboring townland; to back those of the mountain region against those of the valley lands; those of his parish against the rest; those of the countryside against the towns of Lisdoonvarna and Ennistymon; those of North Clare against other sections of the county; those of Clare against all other counties; those of his class against all others; of his religion against all others; of his nation against all others. Each one of these allegiances has a geographical base, though in the last analysis each one of these is built up out of his personal experience of human relations.

A study of the local community among the small farmers 62/
must thus be a study of the geographic basis of their relationships. In the course of such study an inquiry into the spatial relationships involved in the distribution of produce and shop goods between the farms and the market towns is a first step.

The chief agencies of distribution in the countryside 438
draw upon well-marked areas. Each crossroad shop, each hamlet, each market town, each fair, has its own hinterland. In recent years creameries have grown up at strategic places. Likewise, in the same years, larger towns have pushed their hinterlands farther back into the country districts, and motor lorries go even into the back roads.

The definition of such market areas and the demarcation of those into which such a rural county as Clare can be divided is a relatively simple task. It can be reached by plotting out on the map lists of customers' names and addresses obtained from each of the myriad crossroad centers and clusters of shops sprinkled over the county, combining them with others obtained from records of tolls paid by

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222 of the common people and have not been caught in the net of
674 written records, it is still harder to throw light on some of the
darker aspects of shore life. Both smuggling and wrecking have
almost everywhere at one time or another been regarded as
legitimate methods of obtaining food and acquiring goods from
the sea. A dread harvest from ships sunk by enemy action was
reaped with seeming callousness during two world wars by
coastal dwellers who would risk their own lives in the process.
Driftwood has always been an acceptable gift, and many a
fisherman's cabin is roofed with ship's timbers and its fittings
augmented with ship's furniture. Nearly all these varied shore
222 activities demand a measure of co-operation, and one finds that
476 communal schemes of one kind and another and old ways and
beliefs live long among folk who have to deal with the sea.
Collective effort is necessary in hauling boats and handling nets,
and while there are traditional rivalries between different
coastal settlements each one tends to be a closely knit com-
munity displaying a strong spirit of independence. They were
often able to resist the repressive hand of landlords and they
still remain suspicious of the efforts of government bodies to
improve their lot.

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inveterate wrack-boomers. The separateness of Terrace villagers was made most apparent at the time of the shipwreck through the aggression, both overt and covert, directed against them by their fellows.

The behavior of Low villagers, on the other hand, is often the opposite of that of Terrace people less than a mile away; for instance, the folk of Low are the latest risers and milkers, the least industrious, and the most prone to spend time in the pubs. They claim to be descendants of the earliest immigrants in the seventeenth century and are the most boastful of family genealogies. However, most of the landless householders live in Low and as such are held in low repute by landed villagers. People here are the most receptive to tourists, and the two pubs which attract outsiders and the several private homes in which tourists may lodge all are located in Low. It is said that Terrace folk do not need and are indifferent to tourists, whereas Low villagers could not survive without them, either economically or psychologically. Although islanders today visit nearby islands and the mainland less than did their forebears at the turn of the century, the people of Low are considered the most traveled, past and present, of the local population.

As for attitudes directed outward, most islanders regard the culture of Inis Thiar as more traditional than their own. Often heard is the assertion that 70 years ago the inhabitants of the two islands were almost alike as to behavior and beliefs, but the coming of lighthouse and coast guard families, and a permanent curate after 1919, to Inis Beag introduced successive changes which gradually widened the cultural gap between the two. Another factor of importance hindering acculturation in Inis Thiar has been its lack of good landing facilities for visitors to come ashore; the steamer must stand off the jetty of Inis Thiar in the unprotected and often turbulent sound and be met by canoes, whereas it can approach closely the strand of Inis Beag, between the jetty and a point of land, where under most weather conditions it is relatively calm.

Visitors to Inis Beag also hold the same opinion of the two cultures, and the most often made comparison between the islands is the Irish spoken in them. The people of Inis Beag and Inis Thiar recognize slight differences in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation between the two speech communities, but they seldom rank their respective proficiencies, unless outsiders in one island assert that the Gaelic spoken in the other is "purer." Once a tourist angered visiting Inis Thiar fishermen in my presence by publicly pronouncing that the Irish in Inis Beag is superior, and that he would send his children here to learn Gaelic and then to Inis Thiar to learn English; the tongue-in-check statement was prompted by a discussion of the linguistic skills of the publican in the neighboring island, who is called "the English speaker" because of the rapidity of his speech and chronic misuse of esoteric English words. Indigenous nativists are far more numerous and militant in Inis Thiar than in Inis Beag, and the anger of the fishermen reflected pride in their own culture and their belief that it is more traditional than that of Inis Beag.

Inis Thiar folk are thought by their neighbors to the east to be more industrious and extroverted than themselves. They are believed to rise earlier, work longer and more energetically with fewer breaks for contemplation or gossip with

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passersby, and live more frugally and save more as a result. Gruff, impatient, and often impolite, they talk rapidly in high pitched voices and shout at their beasts and at one another from a distance, and on occasion they will use profanity. Inis Thiar men drink more than Inis Beag men, it is claimed; rather than sipping slowly and savoring their stout and whiskey, they consume it quickly and are more concerned with the effects that it produces. It is admitted in Inis Beag that all Irish are inquisitive and disposed to gossip about their fellows, but islanders to the west are openly so and will "demand" information from tourists and will discuss one another quite freely. Braver, "bolder," and less concerned with morality, men from Inis Thiar rowed to the freighter on several occasions and contested successfully with local folk for salvage, which caused some Inis Beag wives to deride their husbands for not possessing these qualities. Women of Inis Thiar also are thought to be braver and bolder, and remain less in their homes, visit relatives and acquaintances and the shops more often, and in general participate more in social events than do their sisters to the east. Despite being extremely critical of Inis Thiar folk for possessing the above and many other less prominent traits, the people of Inis Beag grudgingly admit that their neighbors possess greater *esprit de corps* and enjoy life more than themselves. Once a person emigrates from Inis Beag, he or she seldom returns; but Inis Thiar emigrants are "clever" and do well abroad, and often return with earnings to remain at home, especially women who come back with "fortunes" to seek husbands.

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The attitudes of islanders toward those living on the mainland—"townspeople" or "city folk"—reveal a primitivistic bias which probably can be traced back to the Viking occupation, when towns first were established in Ireland and primitive Celts became transformed into peasants: "that primitive people retain a morality which civilized people tend to lose; that a man's moral worth declines in rough proportion to his distance from the soil; that civilization must be held accountable for man's noteworthy catalogue of vices;" (Ardrey 1961:147-148). Inis Beag folk regard themselves as impeccably moral and mainlanders, although fellow Catholics, as immoral; yet the "progressiveness" of the latter is envied secretly and gives rise to the sensitivity of islanders to the real and imagined denigration of them by mainlanders for their backwardness. Mainland Irish are thought to be overly pecuniary, dishonest, rude, and promiscuous. When visiting towns and cities on the mainland, Inis Beag people for many years have worn mainland attire so as not to be singled out and ridiculed. They are ashamed of their English speech—even though adults speak the tongue with greater proficiency than many urban dwellers—and believe that they are prey to dishonest shopkeepers, who are ever ready to take advantage of their ignorance and naiveté. Whenever my wife and I paid short visits to a nearby port or to Dublin, we were requested by islanders to make purchases, have repairs made under our name, and transact other business for them because we were "too clever to be cheated." Once in the city, the folk miss Inis Beag with its clear air and broad expanses, and they complain of the tall buildings (seldom more than four stories high) which "press in" on them, the bustle of the main street, the curious stares of townspeople, and the dirtiness of buildings and roads. In claiming that few islanders would prefer to live there

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by choice, an old woman said, "City folk are always troubled. They aren't their own bosses, and they get up too early and work too hard. They face the dangers of traffic, and, worst of all, they meet with temptations of the flesh."

In the last chapter, I discussed two facets of the Inis Beag self-image: their seldom admitted poverty and indolence. Other facets have just been revealed in their appraisals of various groups, and still more are apparent when one examines their attitudes toward visitors to the island. During the summer, they enjoy the presence of strangers on the strand at steamer time, in the pubs, and at parties, and when winter comes many conversations dwell on those who were "great gas"—entertaining in song, dance, or repartee. But outsiders fulfill a far deeper need, in that most of them express admiration for the island and its inhabitants. They praise the beauty, antiquities, and history of Inis Beag, but more importantly the friendliness of the people and those customs and personality traits publicized by writers and film producers, which are "discovered" even when nonexistent or considerably "diluted." Departing tourists usually vow that they will return, and they are asked repetitiously what it was that so pleased them and if they will be "lonesome after they leave." Reflected here are the profound feelings of inferiority of the folk and their need for constant reassurance of their worth. Much of the depression among islanders during winter months is related to the absence of outsiders who stimulate them and are subjects of gossip. [56]

The people of Inis Beag regard themselves as friendly, polite, and hospitable to outsiders—not at all like their Inis Thiar neighbors, who are said not to like tourists and to extort money from them for giving information and allowing themselves to be photographed. Strangers never are derided for behaving in a disapproved fashion but are "treated with dignity," although some men will try to gain free drinks and other favors from outsiders in a calculating and beguiling manner (called "being cute" in Ireland), which is frowned on by the majority of folk. During the summer when tourists are plentiful, many islanders behave according to the nativistic and primitivistic expectations of the strangers: attire becomes more traditional and newer costumes are worn, canoes are rowed with greater vigor, conversations become more boastful, and the like. The sensitivity of the islanders to nativism and primitivism is quite selective, however, in that they extol certain of their indigenous customs and are ashamed of others. Actions which give credence to such character traits as spirituality, strength, and courage are exaggerated, while those which belie such traits as independence, self-reliance, and industriousness are carefully hidden. My wife and I kept a careful record of the responses of Inis Beag folk to questions that we posed concerning their history and culture when we first visited the island in 1958. More than 40 replies turned out to be erroneous, and some of them would have done credit to the most ardent nativist or primitivist. [25]

Most tourists who visit Inis Beag share a mystique fostered by interpretations of island life in the works of writers and film producers. A similar mystique is found elsewhere in the world among idealized primitive and peasant peoples. In Inis Beag, it often causes visitors to seek acceptance from the folk, to resent the presence of other outsiders, to boast of their intimate knowledge of Inis Beag customs, and, in some cases, to "go native" in so far as circumstances permit. 000

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Strangers who spend weeks or months in Inis Beag and are able to grasp some of the realities of life there often leave emotionally distraught, knowing that they never will be accepted by the people. Acceptance by the islanders is a problem faced by not only outsiders, but by immigrants. The latter remain strangers for two or three generations, and some people, particularly descendants of fisherfolk, are regarded as outsiders despite the fact that the families of some have resided in Inis Beag for almost a century. Later we will learn that the islanders have difficulty forming affectional bonds among themselves, even among kin; thus, they are able to give even less of themselves to those "who do not belong." Strangers who know Inis Beag well often complain that they must do all of the "giving," as the folk can only "take."

The islanders also share attitudes toward other individuals and groups, which I can mention only in passing. Among the most important are those concerning outsiders who have lived in Inis Beag for long periods of time (the expatriate Dane, lighthouse keepers, Brendan Behan the writer, and Siobhain McKenna the actress); writers who have composed works about the island and have dwelled there or are folk themselves; particular persons from Inis Thiar and other nearby islands (a policeman, a teacher, a man of great strength, a keeper of a guest house, and a man who provides taxi service between the islands and the mainland in a small boat); peasants from bordering counties; religious groups (Protestants generally, members of the Church of Ireland, Jews, and even Italian Catholics); ethnic and racial groups (Americans, English, Germans, Negroes, tinkers, and foreigners as a class); and, finally, politicians and government bureaucrats and the Irish press.

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I know of but few cases of discrimination practiced against any of these, but prejudices held against some of them abound, based either on historical experiences (with the English and the Church of Ireland) or on views inculcated by returned emigrants (concerning Jews and Negroes, who seldom visit Inis Beag). Islanders, as well as most Irish, are ambivalent about "Yanks," as visiting emigrants from the United States are called, but are mostly critical of them; often my wife and I have been asked on first meeting an Irish person whether we are Irish-Americans or "real Americans," and when we have admitted to being the latter we have been well received. Conversely, we have seen Yanks shunned on revealing their pedigree. They are accused of "lording it over" their Irish kin and friends.

Formal Social Control

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Anthropologists customarily classify social control systems as formal and informal. Formal systems are governments whose controls are based on physical violence or its threat—physical punishment, ostracism, banishment, and extermination; while informal systems include sanctions of a religious or economic nature and those exercised by primary groups—gossip, ridicule, persuasion, and opprobrium. Controls of a negative nature are buttressed by positive rewards, such as services provided by a government or the feeling of security gained from primary group approval. It is not the formal system of local and national governments

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533 the Gaelic speaking Scottish fishermen. Only a few tunes accommodate the songs
[539] sung in the island, and the text is far more important to listeners than the ability of a singer to carry the melody. Much admired is the person who can sing a long ballad without pausing or making a mistake, and each episode of the song is listened to attentively, while an occasional, "God be with you.", "Good man.", or "That's it." from the audience urges the singer on or rewards his efforts.

123 The records of songs that my wife and I brought to Inis Beag with us fea-
533 ture performers who sing in both Gaelic and English, and the latter were favored
177 by the islanders. Contrary to our expectations, they disliked our Gael Linn records
• **[186]** from Dublin, because they could not understand the Irish of the singers; nor did they care for a commercial record cut in a nearby island, for the ethnocentric reason that the singers there are thought to be inferior to their own. We soon had to learn folk songs, as we often were "called out" to sing, but our American songs although admired as to melody, did not arouse the interest of our listeners as to text. "The Cowboy's Lament," once learned, came to be "my song" and was always requested at parties; it is now sung by others in my absence, but never when I am in the island. Just as this song appeals to the masochism of the folk, my wife's singing of "The Lavender Cowboy"—"who had only two hairs on his chest"—in a pub aroused their sexual puritanism, and was never sung again after its introduction because of the embarrassed response of the men. Since we ordered many Irish folksong books in order to learn texts, island singers borrowed them to commit to memory additional texts themselves, and they also requested that we give them texts of "cowboy songs" taken from records.

123 My ballad was prompted by the absence of an indigenous composer, some
533 impromptu rhyming that I had done in the pubs, an eye witness account of the rescue (written by my wife but dictated by me, according to local opinion) which appeared in a Dublin newspaper, and was urged on me by my respondents. I chose the air of the popular broadside song, "Brian O'Linn," and copied the lyric style of its composer, and based as many verses as possible on the more prevalent rumors which arose in the months following the shipwreck. Copying the folklore idiom as accurately as I could, I also employed many Irish terms—especially place-names—and eschewed Yank expressions while incorporating local ones at every
[177] opportunity. In time, island balladiers came to substitute words and phrases, and even stanzas, as they molded the song more closely to their tongue and milieu. Some lines came to be used as proverbs and others to stimulate a variety of conversational responses.

535 Little is known of the history of Irish dancing. The earliest references to
175 round and long dances are from the sixteenth century, and they appear to be older than the single, or "step," dances. The step and figure dances of today were created by the dancing masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (O'Keeffe and O'Brien 1912:13-27). Step dancing preceded figure dancing in Inis Beag, although there is a difference of opinion among elders as to whether or
535 not the coast guard families introduced figure dancing a hundred years ago. Young
178 adults no longer step dance, although since 1960 children have been stimulated
[174] to learn the skill through instruction in the school and by watching and participating in the dances of the students attending summer language school; so this may

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teachers, whose influence and attention earn for the children of these families the greater share of scholarship funds.

Not only has education abroad been a major pull factor in emigration, but local education as well in the form of a summer language school for mainland children, which was established in 1960 and has convened for two months each year ever since. Over a hundred students—in two shifts of a month apiece—attend the school, where in addition to learning Irish formally and speaking it in the homes where they are lodged, they are instructed in singing, playing musical instruments, and set dancing in the traditional mold. Monies from Gaeltacht Eireann support the director from the mainland and the Inis Beag headmaster who teach, a skilled musician who provides music for dancing and also instructs, and the students. Eight hundred pounds were channeled into the local economy in 1960 by this nativistic endeavor hopefully aimed at propagating Gaelic and halting emigration. The influence of the visiting children, who interact with their island counterparts at home and at outdoor dances each evening, is considerable; the outsiders tend to be critical of conditions in Inis Beag and boast of the superiority in every dimension of life on the mainland. It is questionable whether the school has diminished the push effect of emigration by enlivening the social atmosphere of the island as much as it has increased the pull effect by creating even more discontent among young people. There are those who denounce the language school on the grounds that the visiting children speak more English than Irish in the local homes; that many islanders in their greed for profit do not provide adequately for the students assigned to them; and that some of the mainlanders are openly promiscuous and thus subvert the morality of Inis Beag youths.

Since 1960, priests have become more realistic in their appraisal of the causes of emigration and have taken steps to enliven further the social milieu of the island. They have been responsible for introducing set dancing and tin whistle playing instruction in the national school, for organizing yearly athletic, canoe rowing, and dancing competitions between folk of Inis Beag and Inis Thiar, for building the dance hall to serve various purposes, and for setting up a small lending library of books in the school. The hall was built with a Gaeltacht Eireann grant, the free labor of island men, and money gifts solicited from interested parties all over the world. It resembles its predecessor—the boathouse on the strand built by the coast guard company—in that it functions as dance hall, trade school, storage house, and meeting place; but it is much larger and better constructed and has many more facilities than the latter. The folk view it as a mixed blessing, for they disliked building it without being paid wages, and feel now that it is not available to them enough of the time, and when it is, they are charged by the curate to attend dances and view television. Many believe that church and government should have provided wages to the builders to compensate for farming and other time lost, and that "the key of the hall shouldn't be in the priest's pocket." Since its completion, the building has accommodated most of the activities of the language school.

In contrast to the islanders who are deeply committed to the local culture and fear that Inis Beag will become depopulated within the next generation, there